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BURMA GAZETTEER

SALWEEN DISTRICT

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BURMA GAZETTEER

SALWEEN DISTRICT

VOLUME A

RANGOON

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, GOVERNMENT PRINTING, BURMA

1910

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SALWEEN DISTRICT.

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SALWEEN DISTRICT

(BURMESE—THAN-LWIN.)

I.—Physical Description.—A hill district in the extreme north of the Tenasserim Division of Lower Burma, lying between 17° 17′ and 18° 41′ north and 96° 58′ and 97° 46′ east. It includes the whole of the country between the Salween on the east and the Paunglaung range (the watershed between the Sittang and the Yunzalin and the Bilin) on the west. To the north of the district lies Karenni, to the west the Toungoo District; to the south and south-east the Thatôn District; and, to the east on the farther side of the Salween, the province of Chiengmai in northern Siam. Salween is about 120 miles long by 40 to 50 miles broad in a direct line, and has an area of 2,666 square miles. Its distinctive features are the long narrow valleys into which it is divided by ranges of hills, having a general direction of north north-west and south south-east, with peaks rising to 3,000 and 8,000 feet. The whole country is, in point of fact, a wilderness of mountains, and the valleys may more properly be described as long, winding gorges, in which the view is naturally very limited. The scenery in the Yunzalin valley is extremely picturesque, but, owing to the nature of the country, it is confined to short stretches of river and hill, a picture that is repeated with monotonous iteration throughout the greater part of he valley. The pine forests that clothe the hills further north, however, afford some variation to the otherwise tedious beauty of the scenery in general. The country is drained by three main rivers—the Salween, which gives the district its name, to the east; the Yunzalin, one of the Salween's affluents, in the centre; and the Bilin to the west, all fed by innumerable mountain torrents and partaking somewhat of the nature of their turbulent tributaries. They all flow in a south south-easterly direction. The Yunzalin, which divides the district into two halves, east and west, is navigable for country boats as far as Papun, the head-quarters of the district; the Bilin as far as Pawatta, near

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the south-west corner of the district; the Salween, which forms the eastern border of the district, notwithstanding many rapids, can be navigated by native craft throughout as much of its course as lies within the district except at the Hatgyi (the great Rapid), a series of formidable falls which bar the passage a little below where the Thaungyin *Chaung*, the north-eastern boundary of the Thatôn District, flows into it from the east. The Bilin is not an affluent of the Salween but enters the sea in the Thatôn District.

For further particulars, please see pages 27, Volume I, and 602, Volume II of the British Burma Gazetteer, compiled by Colonel H. R. Spearman.

II.—History and Archæology.—Very little is known of the earlier history of the district. Tradition asserts that the eastern portion of the country was inhabited formerly by Yun (Lao) Shans, who have given their name to the Yunzalin river. The bulk of these are said to have been brought away by Alaungpaya on his return from the invasion of Siam, and to have settled in the neighborhood of Syriam. The Karens appear afterwards to have occupied and obtained possession of the country, but were some time later subjugated by the Chief of Cheingmai, a state at that time independent of Siam. The remains of extensive fortifications, said to have been constructed by the Shans, and probably of this period, are still to be seen in the district. After the second Burmese War the country became British territory and was included in the old Shwegyin District, but remained for some years after this in a very disturbed state. A Karen, who called himself a Minlaung (the incarnation of a prince), collected around him a number of adventurers and evilly-disposed persons from the neighbouring Shan and Karen areas, and having persuaded about 1,500 men to join him, reduced these tracts to complete subjection. This outlaw and his followers, however, did not remain long in the country. They were driven out by a mixed British force of Military and Police, aided by friendly natives, and were obliged to take refuge in Chiengmai. Disturbances recommenced in 1867; a chief named Di Pa attacked and plundered several villages, and threatened Papun, and dacoities continued for some time. For the better administration of the tract it was accordingly separated from Shwegyin in 1872 and placed in charge of an officer immediately under the Commissioner of Tenasserim Division, and from this date the area ceased to be styled the Yunzalin (Rwon za-leng)

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Subdivision of the Shwegyin District, and became the Salween District, with Papun as its headquarters.

III.—The People.—The population in 1901 was 37,837, distributed in 246 villages, the headquarters being at Papun. Its numbers have been increasing steadily during the past 30 years. The total was 26,117 in 1872; 30,009 in 1881; and 31,439 in 1891. The district forms a single township called Papun. Of the total population, 23,475 (or 62 per cent.) are Animists and 13,791 (or nearly 38 per cent.) Buddhists. The bulk of the Karen population are animistic in their belief, but the number professing Buddhism is increasing yearly. Karen is the prevailing language.

The Karens form the most important racial element and number 33,448. The Shans come next with 2,816, while the Burmese aggregate is only 953. The other races that make up the total population are for the most part Taungthus and Talaings. There are a few natives of India.

Karens.

The Karens of this district differ from those of other districts in speech and dress. Their language is Sgau-Karen but of a different dialect to that spoken elsewhere. The dress of both men and women consists of a single robe called a "Thindaing." This garment is in shape like a sack with a slit at the closed end for the head and two others at the sides for the arms. The girls and unmarried women wear white thindaings, men and married women wearing coloured ones. They do not appear to build any pagodas for themselves but where pagodas exist join the Buddhists in worship there. In remote villages their worship takes the form of eating and drinking. Karens are "nat" worshippers and stand in great fear of the nats or spirits. Whenever they are visited by sickness or meet with accidents of any kind they ascribe it to the doing of a nat and do all they can to appease him. Their first effort in such cases is to find out where the offended nat resides. In case of accidents it would naturally be at the place where it occurred, but in case of sickness the following procedure is adopted. A chicken is killed and one of its leg bones is taken and by some occult process the cardinal point at which the nat resides is divined. Then the stricken one endeavours to remember what took him in that direction last before his illness and the place he went to. The place being thus determined an offering is made there. Liquor is specially distilled at home for the purpose. A few drops of this liquor with a little piece of the chicken

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and some boiled rice are then offered to the nat at the supposed place of his abode, under a tree generally, and the balance of the meat and drink is consumed by the villagers. Their funeral ceremonies are interesting. The inhabitants of all neighbouring villages are invited to attend, and are entertained by the inhabitants of the village in which the death occurred while the ceremony lasts. The young men and maidens arrange themselves in opposite rows and chant love songs alternately, and many matches are said to be made between them in this way. Their marriage ceremony consists chiefly of eating and drinking, liquor being again distilled for the occasion. Their mode of living is very simple and they seem to get along without quarrelling, such disputes as occur being settled by arbitration among themselves. One of their strange customs, which appears to be dying out, is their procedure in a case in which a man betrays a maid and she is found with child. If the betrayer will not or cannot marry the girl he is obliged to give her a buffalo as compensation. But the curious part is that the girl in no way benefits by the gift as the animal is immediately slaughtered and the meat divided among the whole village. In a country where men and women work alike for their living the question of of maintenance of the child does not seem to arise.

The Karens are fast adopting Burmese customs, and in many cases have induced Burmese Pongyis to live in their village and follow his teachings.

Legends. There are no stories or legends connected with the hills which abound in this district, but they are all vaguely believed to be the abode of nats. There are no pagodas or monasteries of ancient date, every one of them having been built within the past twenty years.

IV.—Agriculture and Irrigation. — The soil is uniformly poor, except here and there in the Bilin and Yunzalin valleys, where loamy alluvial deposits have been formed. The rainfall is always ample and seasonable, but the extremely hilly nature of the country and its poor soil afford little scope for agricultural development. Owing to the comformation of the surface *taungya* paddy cultivation naturally takes the first place in the various systems practised. Lè, or wet-paddy cultivation, is carried on in the small area of low-lying plain land in the valleys. It is mostly in the form of terraced fields, flooded by means of drains, connected with hill streams or torrents, which, dependent on the rainfall, can

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only supply the necessary water for this kind of cultivation during the monsoon period. Areca palms are grown freely in sheltered spots between the lesser hill spurs.

In 1906-07 only 23,082 acres were cultivated. Paddy is the principal crop raised and is the staple food grain occupying 19,367 acres of the total in that year. Other food crops are raised in such small quantities as scarcely to deserve mention. A moderate quantity of sessamum is grown on old *taungyas*, but details of the area under this crop are not available. The greater part of the oilseed is exported in bulk, though some of it passes through the local oil mills (si-zon). Betel-nuts are also produced and exported in fairly large quantities, the area under this form of cultivation being 3,243 acres in 1906-07. Nothing else is grown save a little tobacco and sugar-cane for local consumption. **Staple crops.**

Cultivation has steadily increased year by year, but it cannot be expected in a rugged country like Salween to attain anything like the important position it holds in other districts. The increase in the output of paddy is chiefly due to the demand of an increasing population. Improvements in quality by selection of seed is not understood by the cultivators. No loans for land improvement have been applied for or made, but advances to agriculturists for the extension of cultivation have from time to time been granted. Droughts, floods, and insect plague have never been experienced in the district, but cattle disease occurs yearly, though not to any serious extent. There is no cattle or pony-breeding, and although elephants, buffaloes and bullocks are largely used they are all animals that have been imported from elsewhere, chiefly from Northern Siam. All overland transport is carried on by means of elephants and pack-bullocks. Ponies and mules are scarce and rarely used. **Cattle.**

V.—Forests and Minerals.—The District is essentially a hill-tract, and is traversed in a general north and south direction by ranges of hills. The country is composed of several groups of beds of palæozoic age, together with metamorphic rock, the whole traversed by granite and elvan dykes, in which gneiss, limestone and hard calcareous sandstone are associated. The last two are probably of the Moulmein group and of carboniferous age.

A dense mass of tropical forest trees covers the lower or southern portions of the narrow river basins, becoming nterspersed higher up the valleys and on the hill slopes **Flora.**

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with mixed forest trees, including teak, *padauk* (pterocarpus indicus), *pyingado* (xyliadolabriformis), and Albizzia Lebbek, with divers species of oak, fig, bamboo, etc. Orchids and ferns abound on the trees and rocks. In the northern part of the district large forests of pine occur at an elevation of 2,000 feet and upwards. The varieties met with are Pinus Khasya and Pinus Merkusii.

The forests are of three classes. In the lowlands the ground is covered with tropical forests, while higher up the valley and on the hills the slopes are clad with mixed and pine forests. The timber contained in them includes teak, *pyingado* (xyliadolabriformis), *pyinma* (lagerstroemia flos-reginae), *padauk* (pterocarpus indicus), *thingan* (hopea odorata), and a number of other trees. Bamboos are plentiful, and various kinds of cane are found. Reserved forests cover 159 square miles, of which 123 square miles are under measures of protection from fire. No forests have been notified as protected, but the unclassed forests amount to approximately 2,000 square miles. Teak plantations in an area of 78 acres were started in the year 1876 and in a few of them *padauk* has been mixed with young teak with fair success. After this, planting was carried out annually up to 1897, and a total area of 10,093 acres was planted with teak six feet by six feet mixed in a few instances with *padauk*. Out of 10,093 acres about 25 per cent. have failed and 75 per cent. are in existence now. The receipts from forests in 1903-04 amounted to 1·6 lakhs. All the timber extracted from the District is floated down the Salween to Moulmein.

Minerals. Lead and iron ore have been discovered in various places, but much of the former could not be profitably extracted unless a great demand for the metal were to arise in the immediate neighbourhood of the workings. Veins of lead have also been found in more accessible parts of the District. The ore is said to contain about 14 oz. of silver to a ton of metallic lead. An attempt was once made to exploit a vein discovered a short distance up the Kanyindon, a tributary of the Yunzalin, but though much valuable machinery was imported the work was abandoned very soon after operations had commenced. The iron ore occurring in the District is of little or no value. Gold dust is found in the Mewaing creek, a tributary of the Bilin, flowing into it from the west. The inhabitants of the Shan village of Mewaing, who are mostly petty shop-keepers, wash for gold in the dry season, when the auriferous mud banks are exposed. The gold occurs in diminutive scales, and the result of a

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season's washing is said to be from one to two ounces of gold dust for each worker.

The district abounds in wild animals, principally deer, samber, and wild hog. Tigers and leopards are very numerous, and bears are also frequently met with, but large game of other kind is not common. Fauna.

VI.—Occupations and Trades.—About 86 per cent. of the total population were engaged in or dependent upon agriculture in 1901. Of this number nearly seven-eighths were supported by *taungya* cultivation alone.

Manufactures are almost non-existent. Cotton weaving by hand is carried on as a source of income on a small scale, for the most part by Shan and Talaing women. The industry is universal among the Karens, whose women supply the greater part of the requirements for their household in the way of the clothing, but these do not manufacture for sale. Mats are woven by both men and women for household use. Oil is pressed from sessamum seed in a few oil-mills, the produce being disposed of in the local market. The Karens are permitted to manufacture liquor in small quantities for their own consumption. There are three licensed outstills for the manufacture of country spirit for sale. In addition to traffic with other portions of Burma there is a steady trade with Karenni and Siam, over three main routes, the Dagwin route, leading due east from Papun across the Salween into Siam, the Kyauknyat route, somewhat more to the north, and the Kawludo route, farther north again. Both the latter routes communicate with Karenni as well as with Siam. The chief import into the district is cattle, and live-stock and treasure may be said to be the only conspicuous imports. Clothing, jewellery, tea, etc., are also brought in, but in small quantities. About 80 per cent of the imports come from Siam. The chief exports are silk and cotton piece-goods, wearing apparel, jewellery, betel-nuts, manufactured iron, petroleum, salt and provisions, as well as silver (rupees) and gold (Chinese). Siam receives 60 per cent. of what is sent out, and Karenni takes the rest. Ninety per cent. of the imports from Siam and eighty per cent. of the exports to that country are carried over the Dagwin route while the remainder go through Kyauknyat. The roads on both these routes are merely rough paths crossing extremely hilly country, and as a rule elephants and bullocks only are employed as transport. An improved bridle-path between Papun and Dagwin is, however, under construction. The export and import to

Manufactures. Trade.

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Karenni are divided between the land and river routes. The former passes close to Kawludo, a police post in the North of the District; the latter commences at Kyauknyat, at which place goods for Karenni, carried from Papun on elephants or bullocks, are transhipped into boats which proceed up the Salween to their destination. With the exception of betel-nut, nearly all goods for export are brought to Papun by boat from Moulmein. There are trade registration stations at Dagwin, Kyauknyat and Kawludo. The total value of the merchandise imported from Siam and Karenni in 1903-1904 was 46½ lakhs, and the total value of that exported was 2½ lakhs.

VII.—Means of Communication.—The chief centres which connect with Papun, the headquarters of the District, are Bilin in the Thatôn District (73 miles), Kamamaung on the Salween (55 miles), Dagwin, on the Salween (28 miles), Kyauknyat, Kawludo, Lomati and Mewaing within the limits of the District and Shwegyin (in the Toungoo District). From all these the roads were mere jungle tracts till very recently, but are now being improved. The Papun-Bilin road is to be a cart road, the others will be bridle paths. The waterways are the Salween, the Yunzalin and the Bilin rivers. On the first, intercourse between Kyauknyat and the Karenni country on the north is maintained by means of country boats. The Yunzalin is the chief means of communication between Papun and Moulmein, and nine-tenths of the goods brought to Papun for local consumption or for export are carried up it by boat. The weekly mails are also conveyed by the same means. The Yunzalin is not at present navigable for launches, but might without great difficulty be improved and made so during four to six months in the year. The Bilin river is an important waterway, and is the channel for most of the import and export trade of the western areas of the District. There are ferries across the Salween at Dagwin and Kyauknyat, and others on the Yunzalin and Bilin rivers.

The route to the headquarters of the district at present is *viâ* Moulmein. A launch of the Irrawaddy Company runs up daily from Moulmein to Shwegun while another runs down. Arriving at Shwegun about dusk one has to proceed thence in a country boat to Papun which takes six days. There is a Public Works Department rest-house at Shwegun where one could spend the night. The first day's boat journey brings one to Kamanaung or Kawkayet which is three miles higher up the river. There is a Forest Bungalow

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at Kamamaung and at Kawkayet a commodious *zayat*. The second day's journey brings one to Mepli where there is a Public Works Department rest-house. The third day Kadaingti is reached where there is also a Public Works Department rest-house. The fourth day brings one to Kunchaung where there is a Forest bungalow. On the fifth day Kuseik is reached where there is a Public Works Department rest-house. From Kuseik one can get to Papun by road (9 miles) or by boat which is somewhat longer. There is a likelihood of the Flotilla launch running up to Kamamaung soon. In this case there will be an alternative route from there to Papun by road. The road is not yet fit for wheeled traffic. The railway now runs from Rangoon to Bilin. There is at present a road from Bilin to Papun (73 miles). When this road is improved and properly bridged this route will also be available.

VIII.—Famine.—The district as a whole has never suffered from scarcity of food. The quantity of food grain produced yearly in the east and north-east parts of this district generally falls short of the requirements of the population of those tracts, but supplies are always procurable and are regularly obtained from the low-lands.

IX.—Administration, General and Judicial, Public Works, etc.—The District Superintendent of Police is also the Deputy Commissioner, and carries on the administration of the district with the assistance of a Township Officer. There are six *thugyis* of Circles. Sections 2 to 13 of the Lower Burma Village Act have been extended to some parts of the district, and consequently only some of the Village headmen, who are here called *Kyedangyis*, exercise magisterial powers.

Public works.

The district forms a subdivision of the Martaban Public Works division and is included in the West Salween Forest Division, which also comprises a portion of the Thatôn District.

Civil and Criminal establishment.

Salween forms part of the Tenasserim Civil and Sessions Division, while the Deputy Commissioner is *ex-officio* District Judge. Civil work is light, and the district is on the whole remarkably free from crime. Cases of petty theft are confined to Papun and the large villages, but the culprits are seldom Karens, who are not generally given to petty thieving. Elephant-stealing, and the illicit extraction and sale of teak logs, however, are forms of crime that have a great attraction for the Karen.

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Police. For the Police work the District Superintendent is assisted by an Inspector of Police who is stationed at head-quarters. There are, further, two head-constables, seven sub-inspectors, 102 constables and 10 *yazawutgaungs* (rural policemen) as well as a military police force of 125, including one native officer. The armed police are posted in seven stations. The district possesses no jail. All prisoners but those sentenced to short terms of imprisonment are sent to the Moulmein jail. The short term prisoners detained at Papun are confined in the police lock-up.

Jails.

X.—Revenue Administration.—No thorough survey has yet been undertaken and somewhat primitive methods of conducting revenue work prevail. Land is assessed according to the nature of the cultivation it is brought under, as well as the quality of the soil. The rates of paddy land are Re. 1-8-0, Re. 1 and 8 annas per acre, according to the quality of the soil and other conditions prevailing in the different parts of the District. Garden land and *kaing* are uniformly assessed at Rs. 2 per acre. *Taungya* is assessed at 8 annas per *da* or man, and for revenue purposes a man is estimated to be capable of working two acres of taungya land. The aggregate number of holdings amounts to 9,650, and the average extent of each holding is two acres. No revision of assessments has been made for over 10 years.

The following table shows, in thousands of rupees, the growth of the revenue since 1880-1881 :—

	1880-81.	1890-91.	1900-01.	1906-07.
Land revenue ...	18	11	20	25
Total revenue ...	29	27	37	45

XI.—Local Self-Government.—There are no municipalities or town committees in the District.

The income of the District Cess Fund for the maintenance of communications and other local necessities amounted in 1905-06 to Rs. 15,317. Civil works absorbed Rs. 9,072 of this total and district post charges Rs. 1,096.

XII.—Education.—The standard of education in Salween is lower than anywhere else in the Province except in the Chin Hills. In 1901 the proportion of persons able

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to read and write was only 7·2 per cent. A school has been opened by the American Baptist Mission at Papun. It is under a Karen teacher, and it is attended by about 40 boys and girls. Another small school has been started by the same mission in Bwado, a small Karen village south-east of Papun. There is also a small elementary school in Papun for Buddhist children who are taught in the vernacular only. The Buddhist monks, as elsewhere in Burma, impart such education as is not given in the missionary and lay schools. In 1901, native Christians numbered 174, of whom 133 were Baptists, chiefly converted Karens. These latter possess a chapel at Papun and support a native pastor.

XIII.—Public Health.—The climate in the valleys, generally speaking, is moist, hot and unhealthy, and has a peculiarly enervating effect on persons not acclimatized to it. In the upper part of the Yunzalin valley, however, at an elevation of 2,000 feet and upwards, in the pine forest tract, pleasanter and healthier conditions prevail, though even there climatic conditions leave much to be desired. In the north the thermometer falls to freezing point at night in the month of January. At Papun in the cold season, the temperature ranges between 65° and 80°, in the hot season between 75° and 97°. The rainfall, which averages 114 inches annually, is evenly distributed throughout the District. There is practically no rain during the first four and the last two months of the year. The hospital at Papun is the only one in the District. It has accommodation for nine patients, and during 1906 the number of in-patients treated was 144, and that of out-patients was 2,665 while the total of operations performed was 39. Its income for the same year consisted of a grant from Provincial funds of Rs. 3,875 and Rs. 172 from subscription.

Vaccination is compulsory only in Papun. In 1906, 874 persons were vaccinated, representing 23 per 1,000 of populations.

XIV.—Minor Articles. — (*a*) *Papun* Headquarters Town. The headquarters of the Salween District is at Papun, which is situated in 18° 3′ north and 97° 28′ east, about the centre of the District, on the left or east bank of the Yunzalin river, 73 miles from the confluence of that stream with the Salween. It is confined between two ranges of hills and has the reputation of being

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an extremely unhealthy place. It is little more than a village, its population in 1877 being 735, and in 1901, 1,422. About 40 per cent. of the population are Shans, the other nationalities, Karens, Burmans and natives of India, making up the remainder in approximately equal proportions. Papun is the starting point and terminus of caravans to and from eastern Karenni and the north-western portion of Siam, and contains a court-house, a hospital and two schools. Papun is the headquarters of the Papun township which is conterminous with the district itself.

There is no village in the District with a population of over 1,000 inhabitants except Papun, the headquarters of the District.

(*b*) Subdivision—Papun.

(*c*) Township—Papun.

NOTE.—The boundaries of these are conterminous with the boundaries of the district.

XV.—Names and dates of Officers taking over charge of the District.

Statement showing the names and dates of taking over charge (of the Salween District) of the various Officers.

Name.	Date of taking over charge of the district.	Remarks.
Mr. S. L. Aldworth ...	7th October 1888.	
Mr. E. Martini ...	6th January 1889.	
Mr. W. N. Baines ...	1st October 1889.	
Mr. R. B. Hawkes ...	1st December 1893.	
Mr. E. Martini ...	24th September 1896.	
Mr. A. J. A. Jardine ...	21st January 1897.	
Mr. W. N. Baines ...	16th April 1897.	
Mr. R. B. Hawkes ...	4th December 1900.	
Mr. A. E. Hopkins ...	1st March 1902.	
Mr. H. F. Hertz ...	27th March 1902.	
Mr. H. P. Pedler ...	3rd April 1906.	
Mr. R. C. Rogers ...	25th March 1907.	

R. C. ROGERS,
Deputy Commissioner, Salween

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DISTRICT SALWEEN.

BURMA.

TABLE OF SYMBOLS.

Province Boundary (External).....

Do.....do.....(Internal) & of State.....

District.....do.....

Road from Papun to Belin.....

Bungalow.....+

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